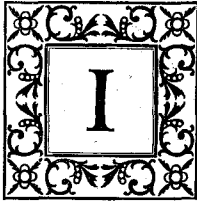


A Ranchwoman's Guests

BY L. M. WESTON

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IN town, when expecting dinner-guests, I took the opportunity to display my finest linen and best chinaware, polished up the silver, and lay awake nights trying to think of rare delicacies likely to tempt their jaded appetites.

At the ranch, if any one happened to be on the premises at meal-time, neighbor, stranger, prince, or pauper, he was invited to sit down at an oilcloth-covered table in the kitchen and eat what was before him; it might be fried chicken and ice-cream, or boiled meat and cabbage.

In town, my guests appeared in their company clothes and manners, and my hired help waited on them.

At the ranch, hired help and guests sat down at the table together in their everyday garments, that might be clean or dirty, whole, ragged, or ornamented with patches.

We had real heart-to-heart talks, though, around that kitchen-table; and I thoroughly enjoyed them.

At first, I was rather overwhelmed by so many impromptu dinner-parties, and decided a woman must be hired to assist me.

Thinking to kill two birds with one stone, we engaged a married couple who agreed to sleep in the bunk-house and help with the work, the man in the field, the woman in the house.

The day after their advent, my husband confided to me that he dared not drive a team the man hitched up without carefully examining the harness, as he was sure to find a buckle too tight or too loose, or unfastened, which was likely to mean disaster with our spirited young horses. "However," he added, in a self-sacrificing tone, "if the woman's help is satisfactory, I'll try to get along with him. Every one says if you hire a married couple one of them is sure to be no good."

"I have heard that, too," I said, "and supposed, in this case, it was the woman who wasn't worth her salt."

Then I proceeded to unfold my tale of woe. My lady help had a mania for house-cleaning—scrubbed everything, even to the coal-scuttle; but her cooking was atrocious. She had a positive genius for spoiling good food by putting it on the range. I had to stay in the kitchen all the time she was preparing a meal or there would be nothing fit to eat. That very noon I had told her to make potato-cakes from the mashed potatoes left over from last night's supper, and she had evolved something as hard as rocks. I was sure Babe Ruth could have batted one of them over the diamond, and found it intact after a home run. I also informed my amused spouse that, if I had to do the cooking, it would be easier to feed four than five, so he could hire a bachelor, with my blessing, and let the married couple go.

They went—and I cooked for a succession of bachelors before we found one that suited us. Some were lazy, some knew nothing of ranch work, some knew too much, or thought they did, and some were mean to the horses. Amongst these last was one who made quite an impression on me, his ideas were so pronounced and peculiar from a religious standpoint. He was firmly convinced he bore a striking resemblance to the pictures he had seen of the Saviour, so wore his hair and beard in accordance with this belief. He thought it was wicked to go to the theatre or play cards, so his sole diversion was playing a mouth-organ from which he drew forth sounds calculated to make one long to be afflicted with deafness.

One morning he and my son were ploughing in the same field, when the words, "Mad dog you, mad dog you," broke the soft spring quietness.

My son left his plough to investigate the trouble, when the man burst forth

with a tirade about the stupidity of that "mad dog" horse, and finished by striking the animal brutally over the head, saying, "he would learn him, by dog."

He got his time then and there. On our ranch, we do not approve of striking our four-footed servitors over the head. Before the man left, however, we learned that he thought it was wicked to swear, so reversed curse words and spelling to quiet his conscience.

Well, he isn't the only one who has called wrong right, and tried to fool the Almighty by ingenious subterfuges!

We hired another man that I took to be a Russian at first glance. He rarely spoke for the first few meals, then I purposely made some allusion to the Bqlsheviki, and his tongue was untied. He was really quite eloquent on the subject of Russia's liberation from the tyranny of capitalistic czars. At that time Lenine and Trotsky were riding the crest of their wave of popularity, and wanting to learn the secret of their influence I listened attentively to the laboring man's ideas. I found that, like most of the so-called common people, he resented being looked down upon by persons of wealth and education. His ideas, as far as I could see, were really about the same as those of the average self-respecting poor man in the United States. He did not object to working for a living, if other people were also laboring along the lines for which they were best fitted; he did not object to going without luxuries and comforts if other people only took what they earned honestly; but he did object to being snubbed, ignored, and exploited by moneyed parasites.

He did not stay long with us, as he had a homestead on which he was obliged to do some work, so I had no chance to ask his explanation of the disastrous results of the Lenine-Trotsky régime.

At harvest-time and other rush seasons we hired any men we could find; so sometimes we would have three or four total strangers at the table. Many of them had evidently been well brought up, were familiar with a butter-knife and a sugar-spoon, and not astonished when pie or dessert was served on extra dishes.

Often they would not give their real names, and betrayed themselves by not

answering when addressed. They could all tell strange tales of many lands, but usually reserved them for the bunk-house. Few of them seemed accustomed to the presence of a lady.

Still there were exceptions, amongst whom was Pat the Irrepressible—a blue-eyed, well-meaning boy, who was much too good to be wandering around the country doing day's work and drinking moonshine. Sometimes he would linger a moment, after the others went out, to pet the cat, or pat the dog, and tell me some little incident about animals he had liked particularly. I could not help but think something had sent him forth from a good home and that he hid an awful heartache under his joyous, care-free manner. He was reckless, too, and wouldn't take a dare, as I learned when he swung up behind my son, who was mounted on his worst-tempered saddle-horse.

The animal was astonished at first, but in a minute things began to happen. Pat clasped his arms around my son's waist, and, a second later, his voice rang out with: "Wait a bit, me hat's off."

The bystanders were convulsed with laughter, especially when, a little later, Pat cried again: "Wait a bit, I'm off."

My son was having all he could do to stay on the spirited creature himself, consequently could not fully enjoy Pat's contortions and desperate efforts to ride double; but the horse quieted down immediately after throwing his extra burden.

Pat understood table etiquette if he did stuff newspapers in his shoes in lieu of stockings, and when alone with the family amused us considerably by imitating one of the shockers who could eat so dexterously with his knife that we all gazed at him in wonder.

"Sure, I was expecting he'd take both hands to that macaroni," he commented gaily; "but any one would admire the way he managed to wrap it round his knife, and get the whole helping in his mouth at once."

Pea season was over, but my son and Pat begged me to serve canned peas, as they wanted to see how the knife expert would handle them. I laughed, while rebuking the thoughtless boys for ridiculing a man who merely lacked social advantages. He was the best shocker we had,

and earned every mouthful he ate, and he ought to have had the privilege of eating as he chose.

"Hewers of wood and drawers of water" have been despised for ages, but why? Isn't the work needful? Can we boast of our culture and civilization until we realize that it is not the kind of work that counts but the way that work is done? "Can the eye say unto the hand, I have no need of thee?"

We may be thankful we are not obliged to do the disagreeable tasks and bear the heaviest burdens; but there is no reason why we should be proud of the exemption. I used to be an intellectual snob myself, but close intercourse with brave, patient, good-hearted working men and women cured me.

A Montana rancher must be "all man" to hold down his job, and his wife must be a real helpmate; I lost my pride in intellect and culture when I saw what my neighbors could do, dare, and suffer, without a murmur, and realized that I was inferior, measured by their standards of courage and endurance.

But I did know how to cook; I tried my best to gratify the appetites of those laboring men, and experienced quite a thrill when the dexterous wielder of knives, after eating a generous helping of soft molasses cake piled high with whipped cream, leaned back in his tipped chair and said it was the nicest stuff he had ever tasted.

We were so far from any other habitation that sometimes I would get a dreadful scare, although we always kept loaded guns in the house.

I remember one stormy March morning we were all surprised, on looking out of the window, to see a strange man walking up from the barn. He seemed to have some difficulty in making his way against the wind and snow, but he circled the house and went back to the barn.

It was before breakfast, and my husband and son slipped into their outer garments, took the milk-pails, and followed the stranger.

I watched, saw them speak to him, then all disappeared into the barn.

Shortly afterward I looked out and there was the newcomer walking toward the house again. He circled it as before. I concluded he was an escaped lunatic, to

be wandering around in a storm like that, and hovered near the corner where I kept my twenty-two rifle.

However, the queer-acting individual went back to the barn, and pretty soon I saw the three men making their way up to the house. My husband entered first, and whispered to me that it was some poor fellow half-crazed with moonshine who would probably perish if we did not shelter him from the storm.

So I politely welcomed my unexpected guest and invited him to sit down at the breakfast-table.

But he was still suffering from the effects of his liquid refreshments, and could not eat, although his vigorous exercise had sobered him enough to enable him to tell that he had left the moonshiner's place some time in the night and struck out for his auto, as he supposed; in reality, he took exactly the opposite direction from the place he had left it.

He finally found a straw-stack, lay down, and went to sleep. He was awakened by the storm that had come up, suddenly, during the night. He had sense enough left to fear he would freeze to death if he did not find some ranch, so kept on walking through the rapidly deepening snow until he reached our barn.

His face was pitifully white as he talked, and he was trembling from head to foot, and looked about ready to succumb to the consequences of his foolishness, which he bewailed in every other sentence.

We gave him some medicine, built a fire in the bunk-house, and told him to go to bed.

At noon he reappeared, sat down at the dinner-table, ate a good, hearty meal, and, as the storm was over, he soon departed. He did not ask our name, and was evidently trying to keep his own identity a secret.

We were somewhat amused when, some months later, my son met and recognized him in a wealthy rancher who lived thirty or forty miles away.

There were pretty poor roads in our vicinity, and sometimes we would have as guests people who had lost their way. I remember one warm, still night, in the latter part of May, I was startled about ten o'clock to hear a wagon stop in front of the house.

My son was away, my husband had retired, but I had not yet commenced to undress, so went to the door and looked out.

A boyish-looking figure appeared in the light of the open door, as an undeveloped voice squeaked out that he was trying to find the way to Hadley's.

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed, thinking of the bridgeless, swiftly running creek, not to mention quick mud, steep benches, and deep coolies between him and his destination. "You can't get there with a team to-night. It's a hard road to travel in the daytime."

"I know," he assented; "but I expected to make it before dark. I came from town to-day, but missed the trail some way and have been hunting for it two hours; so I thought perhaps you would let me sleep in your barn to-night and put up my horses. I have feed for them," he added, as though aware that in that year of drought most ranchers were very short of grain.

"All right," I said. "I'll ask my husband to get a lantern and show you where to go."

I went into the bedroom to find my better half already dressed. He had been listening to the conversation, and shared my compassion for the tired boy and his weary team. After the horses had been fed and watered my husband offered the youth something to eat, then made him comfortable in the bunk-house.

Evidently thinking he had trespassed enough on a stranger's hospitality, the young man was up very early the next morning, making ready to depart before breakfast; but we would not allow man and beasts to continue their trip on an empty stomach, and insisted on feeding both before they started.

We learned later that the boy was the son of a well-to-do sheepman who had moved into our neighborhood. We had expected trouble about the pasture, as their land adjoined ours and sheep and cattle do not mix well; but we heard, incidentally, that after "we took in the stranger" his herder had peremptory orders to keep off our grass.

On another occasion, however, I was not so hospitable. One evening, our collie barked long and persistently, and I was

sure evil-doers were in the neighborhood. My son was the only one up and I insisted that he should make an investigation. He was reading an interesting story, and did not want to leave it to prowl around the premises.

But I had been hearing so much about lawless I. W. W.'s and other discontented idle men that I was like the persistent widow in the Bible.

At last, like the judge (in the same story), to get rid of my solicitations, he yielded to them and went outdoors.

He was gone some time, then returned very stealthily.

"Did you see any one?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered in a hushed voice and mysterious manner, "three men, going up the lane."

"Afoot or horseback?" asked my husband.

"Afoot," was the answer.

My heart sank; no honest man in Montana would be travelling on foot at that time of night. Evidently we were about to be robbed and murdered. In the face of such peril, I forgot all my non-combatant, non-resistance theories.

"You get the guns," I said shortly; "I'll take the twenty-two, you the thirty-three, and Dad the shotgun. I guess we can give them a warm welcome, anyway."

A subdued chuckle told me I had been fooled, but my indignation was lost in my sense of relief.

As time went on, however, Buster's bark at night did not put me in such a panic of fear, although I usually rose and looked out of the window. Sometimes I would hear a coyote's cry, although I never saw a sign of one but once; then it was early in the morning, and a shot from my son's thirty-three put an immediate end to the predatory creature's existence.

As the population of Montana averages less than two inhabitants to a square mile, the country is anything but thickly settled; but, though the ranch-houses are rarely locked and often miles apart, they are seldom robbed. Perhaps because there is usually little of value in them; but I like best to think that knaves and crooks do not thrive in the open spaces and crystal-clear atmosphere of the "Land of the Shining Mountains."

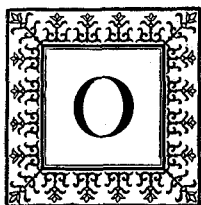
Catherine de Medicis and St. Bartholomew

WHAT THE MASSACRE WAS AND WHAT IT WAS NOT

BY PAUL VAN DYKE

Author of "Catherine de Medicis, Queen of France," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM OLD PRINTS



ON Monday, the 18th of August, 1572, the people of Paris were offered a spectacle more magnificent than usual even for the court of the Valois; the most splendor-loving of all the monarchs of Europe. Along an elevated passage leading past the side of Notre Dame to a high scaffolding erected in front of the great door, the King led his youngest sister, Margaret, clad in violet velvet, with the royal mantle broidered with lilies trailing from her shoulders, her head crowned with a coronet of costly pearls set off by rubies and diamonds. On the scaffolding stood the Cardinal of Bourbon in his red robes, uncle of the bridegroom, the young King Henry of Navarre, who was supported by his cousin, the Prince of Condé. These two were dressed, like the King of France, in pale yellow satin covered with silver embroidery in high relief, enriched with precious stones. Behind the bride walked the Queen and the court ladies clad in cloth of silver and gold, surrounded and followed by a swarm of gorgeously dressed pages and guards and musicians and gentlemen-in-waiting, which must have made a living stream of color poured along the base of those solemn buttresses. One single sombre note there was in the whole flashing train. Directly behind the bride walked her mother, Catherine de Medicis, clad, as always since the death of her husband, thirteen years before, in black velvet.

But no one saw in that single reminder of past grief any omen of coming horror. Rather, in every heart where patriotism

and religion were strong enough to stifle party hate and cruel fanaticism there was a new hope—the hope of an end of fratricidal strife which for ten years had filled France with fire and blood. The fathers of the groom and his best man had both fallen on the field of battle, and now the chief of the Huguenots was marrying the sister of the King.

The young son of the chief justice of the King's Supreme Court had made his way within the cathedral to where stood the brains of the Huguenots, Admiral Coligny. He was a stern soldier, trained from boyhood in the hard school of his uncle, the Duke of Montmorency, acknowledged head of the ancient French nobility and Constable of France. A man of intense religious conviction, Coligny was no ascetic or even puritan, but always the great French noble of the Renaissance; for he had enlarged his château on the Loing with a terraced garden, an orangery, and a stately gallery adorned by Primaticcio and filled with tapestries and works of art. In the last war a huge price had been set on his head and he was now hated by the extreme orthodox, adored by the heretics, the most distinguished uncrowned personage in Europe and the man whom the King delighted to honor. When the curious lad from whom we have this story drew near, Coligny was talking to his cousin and opponent, Marshal Damville; for it was typical of many a man on either side that Coligny had faced his uncle and his cousins on the field of battle. From the arches of the cathedral still hung the banners taken two years before at Moncontour, when the Huguenot army was all but annihilated. The grizzled Huguenot leader,